The Builder.

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SATURDAY, MAY 13, 1848.

A FEW weeks ago we referred to various letters received by us, asking guidance or encouragement in the pursuit of knowledge, apart from technical information, and we put together some remarks on education generally, for which, by the way, we received more kindly acknowledgment from one class of our readers than we had reason to look for.

In the present article we would offer some observations, suggested by three or four communications from the same class of correspondents, relating more particularly to their professional wants. What they all say, in other words, is this:—"I have nearly served my time in an architect's office, with, up to this moment, very little opportunity to examine buildings in progress, and am now occasionally sent to various structures to see that the men are going on properly, and doing their work well. Will you inform me how I am to know this, and what particular points I ought to look to?"

One writes,—That his articles have expired, and that an appointment is offered to him which would be advantageous in many respects. He would be required, however, to see his own drawings substantially carried out, and, candidly admitting that he does not know how mason's work ought to be set, how brickwork ought to be done, good mortar from bad, or where to look for the weak parts of a construction, requests us to give him the information in brief, and enable him to undertake the appointment! Another, admitting an equal amount of deficiency, asks, with greater consideration for our time, to be referred to some one book wherein he may find all he needs to know, properly set forth: and these, let us remind the reader, are real inquiries, and not manufactured cases, as might, by some, be fancied.

Compliance with such at the moment is of course out of the question,—reference to such a book is so altogether. To acquire the knowledge sought for much must be seen, and many books must be read. Little has been done, as we have over and again deplored, to furnish proper aids for reference, and to lessen the labour of acquiring a knowledge of the profession of architecture. Manuals, indices, and properly classified precedents and data, might be made to afford information without effort, the acquirement of which now either absorbs the time which is wanted for the higher branches of the art, or is wholly neglected. "The creation of visible beauty (to which *fitness* is essentially necessary,"—as the writer of this paper has elsewhere, in earlier days, remarked*) "is the highest office of the architect, and requires the highest order of mind, as well as the most sedulous study. This is architecture as an art; but before this point can be reached, before the powers of the mind can be rendered available to this end, architecture as a science, if we may so speak, must be understood; under which head, although requiring a less order of intellect, its ramifications are so extensive, and the points to be considered are so numerous and of such exceeding importance, that unremitting application almost of a life's duration is necessary for its mastery.

It has been often said that a knowledge of construction is as necessary to the architect as that of anatomy to the sculptor; but we would go even farther than that, and say it is as necessary to him as the latter is to the surgeon, inasmuch as it is by means of that alone that he can usefully operate. Without it, although an artist may possess the greatest powers of invention, and be able to produce forms of surprising beauty *per se*, he cannot materially assist in effecting the chief purpose of architecture; namely, the comfort and happiness of individuals, and the advancement of society."

We have known many young men of talent to leave offices of first-rate practice wherein they had been educated, not merely profoundly ignorant of all that relates to construction (even of the workman's nomenclature, and therefore certain not to command any attention from workmen); not merely unable to point out how they would have their ideas carried into execution, and to discover if the work were properly or improperly performed; not merely unable to arrange their plans with a view to the relative expense of certain methods and materials, so that the greatest effect might be produced at the least cost; but so thoroughly imbued with the notion that such mechanical portions of their professional duties were unworthy of their attention, that they were not likely to attempt to gain any acquaintance with them, until they had been slowly taught their error by experience.

It is of the utmost importance that such information should be made easily available. What has been said on this head before in our pages, led more than one publisher to consider the expediency of attempting the production of such a work as was pointed at, and we do hope that a long time will not elapse before it be commenced.

Our student friends, however, must not wait for this, but should apply themselves vigorously to obtain such knowledge through the means already at their disposal; constant personal examination of buildings in progress, and conversation with intelligent practical men, will greatly aid their endeavours. Apart from the study of works expressly devoted to construction, they must of course acquire the leading principles of all the physical sciences, an undertaking by no means difficult in these days of diffusion. To quote again our "Hints,"—

"We do not say, stop at general principles: indeed, you *cannot*, if you desire to maintain your position in society, and pursue your profession successfully and honourably; and *would* not, even were you able; for the pursuit is of itself so alluring, and the gain so certain and so glorious, that, enter once upon the chase, and there will be no need of other inducement to continue it. Our only care is, therefore, that you should early feel the importance of general science, and disregard no opportunities for the attainment of it."

That it is important, who will doubt? The architect is called upon to deal with matter in every shape: surely, he should be acquainted with its properties, and the laws by which it is regulated? In other words, he should be conversant with physics. The decomposition of the materials employed in carrying out his designs would frustrate all his hopes. He must know of what they consist, and the mutual affinities of the elements composing each, if he would, in the first place, choose wisely, or, having chosen, apply a preventive or a remedy for an arising evil. This acquaintance he cannot possibly attain without some knowledge of chemistry, any more than he could economically ventilate or warm an edifice, without comprehending the nature of caloric; or construct a building, to answer some desired acoustical purpose, without understanding the science of sound.

With regard to the inquiry made by some of our correspondents, "What are they to look at more particularly when sent to overlook workmen?" we shall before long offer some suggestions to our student friends.

The society for the publication of works connected with architecture, mentioned by us two or three weeks ago, if properly supported, may be led to aid in supplying the class of works in which we are so greatly deficient, and would thus further benefit the profession.

A meeting of gentlemen interested in the establishment of this proposed society, was held on Thursday in last week, when it was determined to make a general appeal, not merely to the profession, but to all who are interested in the progress of the art and in its literature, with the view of enrolling a sufficiently large number of members at the commencement to begin operations on a good scale. An advertisement detailing more specifically its objects will be found on another page.

The following is a list of the promoters of the association; nearly all of whom are members of the Institute:—Mr. George Bailey, Mr. Barry, R.A., Mr. Booth, Mr. Burn, Professor Cockerell, R.A., Professor Donaldson, Mr. Ferrey, Mr. Garling, Mr. George Godwin, Mr. W. P. Griffith, Mr. Habershon, Mr. Hopkins, Mr. Lockyer, Mr. Lockyer, Jun., Mr. Marks, Mr. C. W. Orford, Mr. C. Parker, Mr. Papworth, Mr. Wyatt Papworth, Mr. Penrose, Mr. W. Pocock, Mr. Scoles, Mr. Sydney Smirke, A.R.A., Mr. Tite, Mr. Thomson, Mr. T. H. Wyatt, Mr. Whichcord, Mr. Wickes.

Mr. Wyatt Papworth was requested to act as honorary secretary, and Mr. Donaldson consented to be appointed treasurer. We invite our country readers to forward their names previous to the publication of the first list of subscribers.

ON THE RISE, PROGRESS, AND DECLINE OF ART IN ITALY, AND ITS REVIVAL IN ENGLAND IN THE PRESENT DAY.*

IT will be almost universally admitted that the present age is distinguished above all others in the history of the world for the intensity of the excitement which prevails in every department of life. In literature and science, in commerce and manufactures, in everything connected with the advancement of civilization, the diffusion of knowledge, the improvement of our social position and relations, the age is characterised by efforts of an extraordinary kind, and which have been productive of proportionate results. It may be emphatically styled, *the age of successful effort*. What mighty and important changes have not been effected in the literary world? Instead of the scanty allowance that was doled out to inquiring minds in the days of our forefathers, instead of the stunted supply that was distributed then among the masses of people—the flood gates of literature have now been thrown open, that the tide of information gathered from widely-scattered sources by careful research, and persevering energy, may flow forth among the multitudes, as freely as the rivers and streams that fertilise the earth.

* "Hints on Construction: addressed to Architectural Students."—London's Magazine, vol. v., p. 260.

* The substance of a paper read at the Institute of Fine Arts on the 29th ult.

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